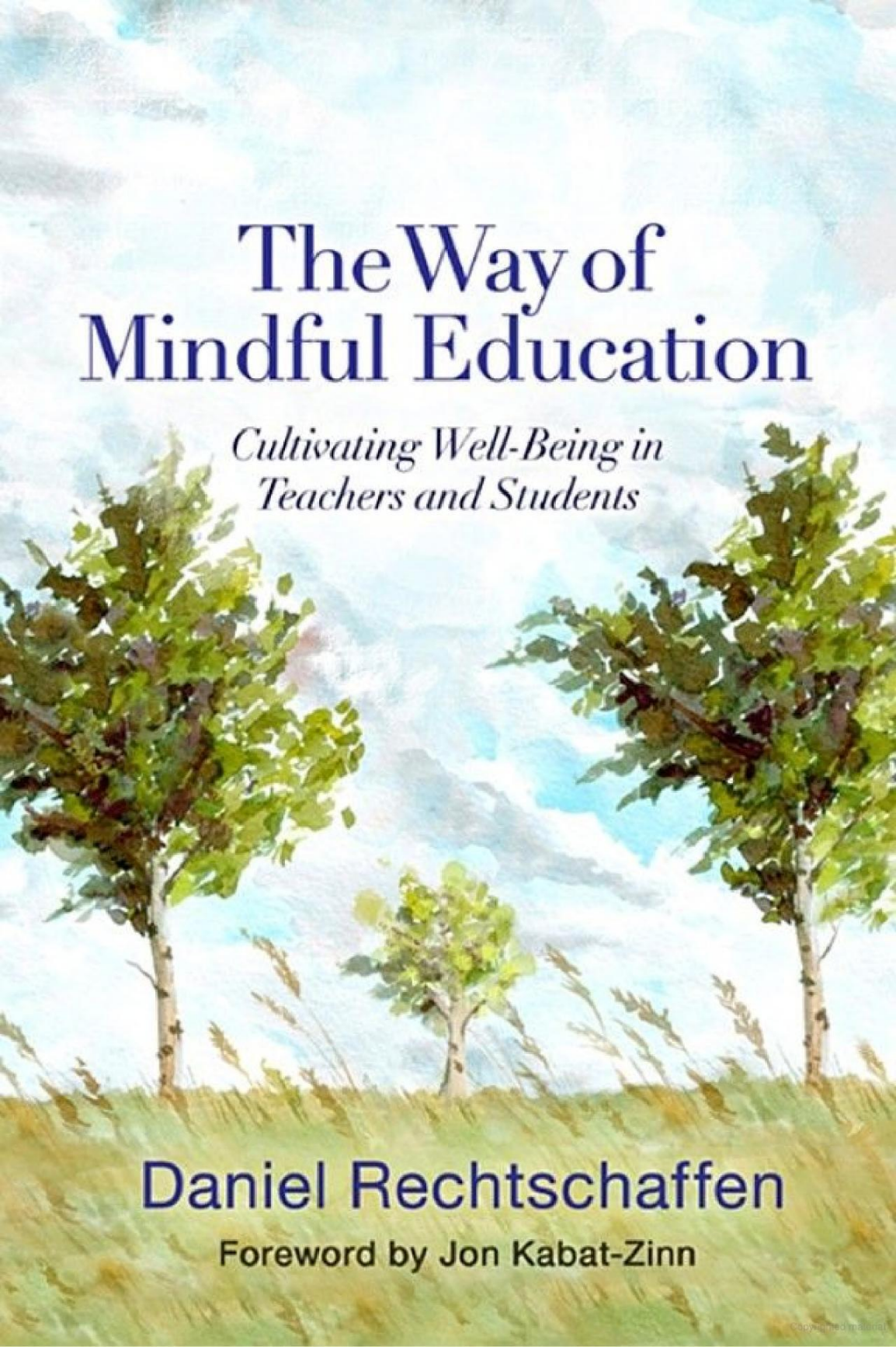
The Way of Mindful Education
Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students
Daniel Rechtschaffen
Foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

My first experience with Daniel Rechtschaffen's work was sitting in on a session he conducted in a middle school class in the Oakland Unified School District when he was working with a group known as Mindful Schools. This school had a reputation as one of the more challenging in the district. When I walked in, a bit late, the class of about twenty-five students was already in total silence. The atmosphere was utterly calm and attentive. Almost everybody was sitting up in his or her seat, but there was no sense of rigidity or stiffness. The students looked at home, and I immediately felt at home in the stillness and silence. I could hardly believe that middle school students were capable of it. The classroom teacher was sitting at the back of the room and Daniel was on a chair at the front. He was holding up a brass bowl. Slowly, as I took my seat at the back of the room, I saw hands being raised, a few to begin with, then more and more of them, all in silence. What was this? What was going on here? What was I observing? I had never seen anything like it before.

Well, it turned out that the instruction for this exercise was for the students to raise their hand when they could no longer hear the sound of the bell. Daniel had struck the bowl with a stick right before I walked in. Apparently listening for the absence of something invited tremendous attending, even among middle school students.

That same day, I visited an elementary school in the same district and saw another mindfulness instructor from Mindful Schools do the same exercise with first graders, again, with the teacher at the back of the room and the instructor at the front. After inviting the children to "put on their mindfulness bodies"—at which point the children all sat up erect in their seats and got very still—and without saying anything more, she rang the bowl in the same way Daniel had. Again, the sound reverberated through the room and slowly, as it receded, I saw little hands being raised, one-by-one, all in silence. The longer it went, the more hands were raised.

This first-grade teacher later shared with me that many of the children in her class had serious attentional problems. She was astonished at how still the room became during these sessions. It was a skill that over time, she found transferred to other moments in the day when she could invite the class to settle, since they knew what it felt like, making it easier to teach the subject curriculum (1).

Primary and secondary school teachers are becoming increasingly pressured to be even more outwardly focused, driven by the "teaching to the test"

directive and culture that so dominates education at this time. The overwhelming emphasis is on information and facts, with the laudable aim, of course, of engendering greater knowledge and understanding in the next generation, and thereby, an educated and presumably maximally creative and effective workforce for the world of the future. Except that the approach itself may be sorely lacking and misguided, perhaps effective for a minority of students, but leaving the majority behind; increasingly stressed, alienated, terminally bored, and even turned off to learning. We could say that the dominant culture in K-12 education is creating a public health crisis in the sense that the health of the next generation depends crucially on skills and competencies that until recently were not the province of school at all.

Overlooked or ignored in the current atmosphere is the domain of interiority—of the inner life of the growing learner—and how it can and needs to be recognized, attended to, nurtured, and developed in concert with all the outer knowledge and competencies so that each child learns how to be at home in his or her own skin, how to calm his or her own mind and body, and how to cultivate self-awareness, emotional intelligence, confidence, and resilience in the face of stress of all kinds and the pressures to perform, to be a certain way, and to fit in. In my experience, nurturing and validating interiority also serves as a catalyst for creativity and imagination.

In the face of this consistent exclusion of the inner life of their students from the curriculum, more and more teachers are turning to mindfulness as a way to promote and support qualities such as the sense of agency, of being your own person, of being fundamentally OK as you are, of being whole, of belonging, in addition to developing specific competencies that are important in sustaining that wholeness over the years, and in optimizing learning. Such competencies include developing the ability to know and recognize our own thoughts and emotions as “events “in the field of awareness and how to disentangle ourselves when we are completely caught up in their content and emotional charge. Simple mindfulness practices can offer reliable strategies for working with the storms and turbulence that inevitably overtake the mind at times and cause sadness or anger, or a sense of not fitting in, of not being good enough, or even not wanting to learn. It promotes increased calmness, focus and concentration, greater impulse control and reduced aggression, and increased empathy and understanding of others among other important outcomes (2).

In making such practices an intimate and seamless part of the classroom experience—as described so effectively in this book—children are given practical opportunities to get to know and explore the terrain of their own being. This includes not only thoughts and emotions but also an awareness of the universe of body sensations, including one’s own breathing, and how they are continually changing, often in concert with one’s thoughts and emotions. Going further, it also includes social awareness, the landscape of being in relationship with others, and learning how to navigate that territory in satisfying ways that foster connection, kindness, and a range of pro-social

behaviors rather than separation, disregard, and enmity.

Interiority and self-awareness require education and cultivation in parallel with the more academic curriculum for these competencies to take root, blossom, and continue to develop and deepen across the lifespan. That cultivation begins with exploring how to be still and what that feels like, how to move intentionally and what that feels like, and how to be maximally present whenever you choose to be or need to be. Mindfulness lies at the heart of social emotional learning. It is essentially about choosing wiser and more adaptive ways to be in relationship to one's inner and outer experience as it is unfolding moment by moment. As we will see, mindfulness adds an embodied practice element to SEL that is likely to help a child's responses be much more balanced, appropriate, and effective in moments of crisis or conflict.

At the heart of the cultivation of mindfulness is awareness itself. Awareness is not something we get or develop but rather something we discover we already have, a capacity that is innate but easily ignored in favor of thinking, another wonderful human capacity. But while thinking gets a lot of air time in school, with the hope of training students to be better and more critical thinkers, there is little or no attention paid to this other equally essential capacity of ours that can help modulate our thoughts and emotions and expand their range. The calling of these times is to discover and familiarize ourselves with this innate capacity and then learn to inhabit it, integrate it into our day, and make use of it in navigating the ins and outs and twists and turns of our unfolding lives. What better place to begin to tap into and nurture this dimension of intelligence than in school?

The cardinal quality of awareness is that it can contain anything and everything that arises in our experience with clarity and discernment and without immediately judging it—a suspension of the usual impulse to immediately categorize and evaluate every aspect of our experience in terms of liking and disliking it, or wanting more or wanting less. Awareness amplifies what is most human in us and expands our relationship with life itself and our responses to it. I think of it as perhaps the ultimate intrinsic characteristic of what makes us fully human.

The direct path to awareness and its intrinsic clarity is the systematic cultivation of attention. The virtues of introducing its cultivation and practice to school children are compelling. Such skills and practices and the potential insights and understandings that can arise from them are, to my mind, no longer optional in the human repertoire. They are absolutely essential for adults as well as children in our rapidly changing and increasingly complex, and often bewildering world, in which, as Linda Stone, a former Microsoft researcher put it, our "default mode" is increasingly one of *continuous partial attention* (3). They complement the standard learning curriculum and make it easier to teach, as the Oakland first-grade teacher observed. They also don't take up a lot of time, especially in the hands of experienced teachers well-trained in mindfulness.

As this book skillfully documents, it is now well known that stress has deleterious effects on the developing brain (4). In particular, stress has been shown to degrade the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex—which is essential for problem-solving, creativity, and reasoning—as well as the activity of the hippocampus, which plays an active and important role in learning, memory, and emotion regulation. Stress also affects the amygdalae, the threat reactivity centers within the brain's limbic system, which get bigger with ongoing stress exposure, and smaller with mindfulness training. For this reason alone, it makes sense to adopt and utilize simple attentional practices that we know through scientific studies can counter the toxicity of stress. Many children don't even come to school in a condition that would allow for learning. They may not have had breakfast that morning, or may have already experienced stress or even violence. Before they can teach the required curriculum, teachers are feeling the need to give their students the tools for self-regulation, for paying attention, for learning how to learn, for tuning their instrument (of learning) before attempting to play it, just as musicians tune their instruments before playing them. The practices in this book, if integrated into the lessons of the day, can help to buffer the deleterious effects of stress on the developing brains of the students. This is especially important for those children at highest risk and where the societal costs of failure to learn and thrive are most extreme.

Other studies over the past twenty years have demonstrated a dramatic decline in children in many of the cognitive and emotional competencies that we take for granted as the foundation for eventually becoming fully embodied adults and contributors to society (5). More recently, studies have revealed the importance of developing skills for deep listening and effective communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, goal setting, and teamwork in public education (6). All these can be improved through mindfulness practice.

According to Linda Lantieri (7), a pioneering educator in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and mindfulness, the added value that mindfulness brings to conventional SEL is primarily in the area of its *embodied practices*, known to promote neuroplasticity; that is, structural changes in the brain regions we just mentioned, as well as others, which have the potential to improve learning and memory, emotional balance, and cognitive perspective taking. Mindfulness practices put a solid experiential foundation underneath the more conceptually and cognitively-based SEL curriculum. They allow each child to regularly exercise the muscle of emotional balance through *practicing* being present and cultivating moment-to-moment non-judgmental awareness (my operational definition of mindfulness) in moments of relative calm, and then, over time, learning to maintain or recover a degree of equilibrium, even equanimity, in the face of stressful triggers and threats. The muscle of mindfulness, when exercised regularly, especially if it is done playfully and with a light touch, makes it more likely that the children will be able to call on and make use of their SEL strategies under threatening and highly emotional

conditions.

My first introduction to mindfulness in the classroom came from a fifth grade public school teacher, the late Cherry Hamrick, at the Welby Elementary School in South Jordan, Utah in the early 1990s. Cherry was an intrepid and highly creative early pioneer in this movement (8). She decided to try to bring mindfulness into her classroom after participating in a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City. In spite of my initial skepticism, Cherry's introduction of mindfulness into her fifth grade curriculum in a number of creative ways was a very successful experiment that stretched out over a number of years. I had the privilege of visiting the school and meeting with her students and some of their parents. Mindfulness was obviously welcomed and having a positive impact not only in her classroom, but in the school more broadly during those years. One anecdote I vividly remember from that time: one of Cherry's fifth graders was overheard (by a parent) saying to one of her siblings when he was complaining about being teased by a classmate: "Just because his mind is waving doesn't mean that your mind has to wave."

Mindfulness-based programs such as MBSR and MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy) have become increasingly integrated into medicine, health care, and psychology due to the growing evidence base for their efficacy in the lives and health of medical patients with a range of chronic stress-related and pain-related conditions and diseases, as well as people suffering from depression and anxiety. In a parallel emergence, mindfulness and other contemplative practices are now making their way increasingly into the mainstream curriculum in colleges and universities. (9). In primary and secondary schools, as we have seen, bringing mindfulness to both teachers and pupils is in part a response to the increasing stress and challenges faced by children, teachers, and schools that, *in toto*, degrade optimal learning (10).

Introducing mindfulness practices into the classroom at any grade level involves considerable creativity and innovation on the part of the classroom teacher. It is not in the slightest a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach. Nor is it a covert strategy for behavior management, even though a likely bi-product of it can be a much more effective classroom atmosphere for learning. What Daniel Rechtschaffen offers us here is an effective, user-friendly approach for classroom teachers, one that emphasizes that there is no one right way to teach mindfulness and that it functions best when the teacher is experimenting with using his or her own life as a laboratory for exploring and deepening the practice of mindfulness. The book provides a range of different creative options and approaches for teachers at every grade level who wish to bring this approach into their classrooms with both rigor and playfulness. It is a treasure trove of perspectives and practices that will be useful for years to come to support and inspire classroom teachers and administrators seeking to introduce and integrate mindfulness into various

aspects of the curriculum, from kindergarten through high school.

In November 2012, I was walking across a football field that the Middle School shares with the High School at Camp Zama, the sprawling US Army Headquarters in Japan. Out of nowhere, a voice came over the PA system declaring a totally matter-of-fact tone of voice: “The chimes will now signal the beginning of a mindful minute.” I could hardly believe my ears. Apparently all the students knew what that meant—they had been training in mindfulness—and dropped into stillness, silence, and awareness for that minute. I learned later that it was the principal of the middle school who made the announcement. This came about because a counselor, Jason Kuttner, thought bringing mindfulness into the curriculum would be helpful. Now it is part of the curriculum throughout the middle school, and many of the high school students have been introduced to it as well. This is an example of how one person’s intention can make a school-wide difference, just as Cherry Hamrick’s did in her school, and so many other teachers, many of whose stories are in the book, are doing as well.

In December of 2013, Chris Ruane, a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom, and for many years a classroom teacher in Wales, gave a powerful and compelling speech in Parliament addressed directly to the Minister of Education sitting before him in the chamber. The speech, which he entitled *Mindfulness in Education*, aimed to make the case for why the efforts in the UK to bring mindfulness into primary and secondary education are so important, and why all classroom teachers should be offered the opportunity to receive quality training in mindfulness (11). He singled out a number of programs as exemplars, including what is called the “.b” program, a curriculum developed by Mindfulness in Schools, the work of two secondary school teachers, Chris Cullen and Richard Burnett. They have developed imaginative and highly popular approaches for teaching mindfulness in elementary and secondary schools in the UK. Their group has a research program linked to the Oxford University Centre for Mindfulness. It is one of a number of inspiring mindfulness programs that Daniel Rechtschaffen describes. There are many others, both at home and abroad.

If you are a teacher, or an educator, or involved in school administration and curriculum development, the book you hold in your hands has the potential to transform your life, the lives of your students, and the life of the school itself, as well as education in America. I welcome its timely publication. May it be a useful and valuable resource for all teachers who wish to optimize both inner and outer learning, and nurture the unique potential and beauty of each of their students.

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Berkeley, California
January 31, 2014

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(3) see: http://lindastone.net/

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(11) see: http://www.theyworkforyou.com/whall/?id=2013-12-10a.66.0

INTRODUCTION

For some reason a particular email from the "White House" looked different than the rest of the political junk mail that so frequently clogs my inbox. It turns out my decision not to send it to the trash was important. "We are pleased to invite you to join Obama administration officials in a roundtable discussion," the message began. They had invited me to represent the mindfulness in education movement, describing the transformational effects these practices are having on our youth.

Before I knew it, I was being screened through the White House gates and sitting with a table of upright army generals, Homeland Security officials, and representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services and a slew of other departments. It has seemed obvious to me from the moment I first tasted the sweet inner stillness of mindfulness 20 years ago that our society could be profoundly transformed if we taught these practices to all children, medical patients, and—why not?—politicians, but I never imagined the government would actually take the leap.

As a family and school therapist, I began teaching the transformative practice of mindfulness to kids in 2006 to help them with anxiety, impulsivity, attention disorders, and depression and to help them cultivate happy and fulfilling lives. I had no idea there was already a mindfulness in education movement under way. Then I learned of organizations such as Mindful Schools teaching in classrooms around the California Bay area, the Mind Body Awareness Project bringing mindfulness to incarcerated youth, and Mindfulness without Borders teaching students around the world. Thrilled that I was not alone, I leapt in and began teaching mindfulness in California classrooms and helping various organizations create mindfulness-based curricula.

Now I have one of those jobs that no one could have imagined 10 years ago. I fly around the world consulting with school systems to help them create mindful, empathic, and inspiring learning environments. One week I'm in Thailand leading an international conference for teachers to bring mindfulness and social emotional learning back to their home countries; the next week I am in Atlanta, consulting with a K–12 school and training their baseball team in attention, embodiment, and team communication; the next week I'm back in California leading a retreat for the educators who are part of the year-long

Mindful Education Institute. Luckily I'm teaching mindfulness and know that to teach well I need to perpetually deepen my own presence, openheartedness, and attention, otherwise the pace of my life would really stress me out. At the airport, when I am asked if the trip is business or pleasure I like to give an emphatic, "Yes!"

I teach educators, administrators, and kids the most fundamental principles. If you are teaching someone to drive a car, you need to sit them in the driver's seat and make sure they know the basic rules of the road. In educating children we are training them how to navigate in the world, but we usually skip over the operating manual. How do your minds, hearts, and bodies work? How do we cultivate attention? How do we develop kindness toward ourselves and others? It's rare that schools or parents show children how to cultivate the very ethical attitudes they are espousing, and usually this is because we were never taught these priceless practices ourselves. We may assume that our own happiness is a state that happens to us, rather than a muscle we can exercise into strength and potency. Once we have gained this insight, we can become strength trainers for our students' attention, happiness, and ethical values.

In 2008 I decided to launch the Mindfulness in Education Conference at the Omega Institute, a holistic learning center in Rhinebeck, New York. This annual conference brings together teachers such as Daniel Siegel, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Linda Lantieri, Goldie Hawn, Danny Goleman, Susan Kaiser-Greenland, and many other leaders in the mindfulness and education field. Leading this conference at Omega has a special significance for me, because it was the place I gained my own education in mindfulness.

My parents, Elizabeth Lesser and Stephan Rechtschaffen, founded the Omega Institute in 1977. My mother and father were pioneers in bringing masters of meditation, yoga, and other contemplative traditions to the American public. I have early childhood memories of Shaolin monks standing on sword blades, yogis twisting their bodies into knots, and meditation masters sitting as still as statues for hours. This all seemed normal to me. I was usually backstage with friends, making forts out of meditation cushions, but I must have been listening to the teachings on some level.

I remember toddling into my father's room at four years old and seeing him sitting motionless, cross-legged, on his bed. I stood there for a few moments, confused. There was a stillness I was not accustomed to. I could tell there was something important happening, but he was just sitting, doing nothing.

I stood transfixed until he opened his eyes and gestured for me to come over. I climbed up on the bed for my first mindfulness lesson. He taught me to watch each breath moving in and out. On every in breath I was to count, one, two, three. . . . Every time my mind ran away I was to bring it back and count again from the beginning.

My brother and I tried to turn it into a competition to see who could count the highest without thinking. "I got to 23," I said. "No way, you're lying!" he replied. We realized quickly that there was no way to verify the other's internal

experience, and hence no way to turn it into a competitive game. We gave up pretty fast and went back to basketball and checkers, but this first glimpse at the inner working of my mind spurred a lifelong inquiry.

Early on I began asking myself unsettlingly awesome existential questions. Why was I here? What happens when I die? I was one of those kids who had an early hunger to ask the big questions of life and had a mindful environment in which that inquiry could grow. I was gifted with parents and teachers at Omega who would listen to my early cosmic questions with care and insight. However, when I would ask my 10-year-old school friends something like, "What do you think happens to our minds when we die?" I would get scared, frozen faces in response.

Not knowing how to speak to my peers or teachers about what I was experiencing led me to split into two distinct selves. There was my "social self," who played with friends, watched Saturday morning cartoons, and sat at my little desk memorizing agonizing timetables. I strove to be as normal as an American kid could become. I would watch MTV with a pen and paper, taking notes on how to be cool. I started a rap group in third grade and wore hip-hop gear 10 sizes too large and Air Jordan sneakers. Although my social self found acceptance in the culture of cool, my "authentic self" was longing to be integrated. School was definitely a place that my authentic self felt like a foreigner trying to pass as one of the locals, wondering why no one at school was talking about the big questions.

I have had to cobble together the holistic education my body, mind, and heart were seeking. Studying Western philosophy in college fed my mind but left my heart and body empty and seeking. Graduate school in psychology met my needs for emotional and relational development, but my body remained neglected. Spending time in nature with indigenous teachers, practicing tai chi, and dancing brought me to a deeper sense of embodiment. My mindfulness practice has been the guiding star the entire time, shining awareness on the journey. My life has been a path of integration, my authentic self and my social self gradually becoming one and the same.

In returning to Omega to lead the Mindfulness in Education conference, I realized I was looking to teach the same empathic upbringing I had been raised with. We usually have 300 teachers join us for this weekend of inspiring speakers, practices, and community building. Soon I realized that to really train a teacher to learn an inner mindfulness practice, embody it for their students, and teach skillful lessons, we were going to need a lot longer than a weekend. I ended up leading five-day retreats, which allowed us to dive much deeper, but still, it seemed like attendees needed more. I started the Mindful Education Institute in 2011 as a yearlong teacher training so that participants could have silent mindfulness retreats of a full week and spend a year as a community bringing this into their worlds. This book is an extension of my exploration of how to best serve this growing mindfulness in education movement.

This movement cannot be summed up in a weekend conference, a year of

training, or in this book. I am inviting you on a journey to a new paradigm, one where we are learning and teaching with our students, which necessitates admitting that we are all works in progress. Like toddlers learning to walk by toppling over again and again, I offer my own clumsy attempts at being a teacher worth learning from, inviting you to stumble with me into a future so inspiring we cannot yet imagine it. I have taught in hundreds of classrooms around the world, but I have never been a full-time classroom teacher; I am humbled again and gain by how much I don't know. I am striving to be an author without being authoritative. In the same way, I am inviting you to become more of a learning companion than a top-down teacher. With this book I invite you on a collaborative journey with me. You have knowledge and insights beyond my own that we all need to hear. The wisdom of a group is always greater than that of an individual.

I can say with certainty that everything we need to build the compassionate society we all want is already here. It's as if we want a beautiful house and are standing next to a giant pile of wood and tools. I have learned from my time teaching mindfulness practices to kids that even preschoolers can learn impulse control, compassion, attention, communication skills, and stress relief—all of the necessary building materials for a healthy, happy, and responsible life. We have the materials; now we need to build the house.

How This Book Is Organized

Part I is Why Mindful Education Matters. There is a great mindfulness in education movement under way. We begin this journey with an introduction to the work that is already happening and being brought to diverse populations in different formats. We need to go back and ask the obvious question of what mindfulness is. Mindfulness has ancient roots with very modern applications. With cutting-edge research we have taken great strides in understanding the effects that these practices have on the mind, heart, and body. We will look at how mindfulness can support our students and us as teachers.

In Part II, Begin with Yourself, we learn that to teach mindfully, we need to be mindful. There's no way around it. If you are a parent, teacher, therapist, or anyone else with children in your life, the greatest gift you can give to them is your authentic presence. With this in mind, I've devoted the section to teaching you the art of mindfulness so that you can embody the practices with your students. Even if you only read this part of the book, you have the opportunity to transform your classroom. We will also look into some basic psychological foundations of how to become aware of ourselves so that we are not projecting onto our students. From here we will learn to cultivate awareness in our bodies, focus attention, develop compassion, and to be mindful in our everyday lives.

Part III, Cultivating a Mindful Classroom, will discuss how to bring these

teachings into the classroom from a place of deepened presence and compassion. We look at the characteristics of a mindful teacher and how to embody our practice with our students. We look at some essential ingredients of creating a mindful classroom, such as council practice, the peace corner, and making classroom agreements.

We examine helpful skills for working with different age groups and how to language these teachings to be most accessible to each developmental stage. We explore cultural diversity and inclusion and how to teach mindfulness in the most appropriate, supportive way. We also examine how stress and trauma affect students and methods to best care for them.

In the final section, Part IV, Mindful Education Curriculum, we finally explore a number of lessons that can be delivered in various settings. We learn how to introduce mindfulness and how to format lessons. These lessons are grouped into four basic types—embodiment, attention, heartfulness, and interconnectedness—and can be adapted for any age group and population. Finally, we learn how to help students integrate mindfulness into their lives. As we bring our mindful attention and compassionate commitment into the world, we help develop the peaceful society we all long for.

This book is an invitation to self-discovery, waking up with a wide-open heart to the world around you, and becoming a skilled purveyor of whole new way of being. I invite you to be courageously hopeful and dedicated with me.

The Way of Mindful Education

PART I

Why Mindful Education Matters

The Way of Mindfulness

Let's begin our exploration of mindfulness with an experiment. Notice your eyes engaging with the letters of this text as you read. At the end of this paragraph, see if you can stop and focus on the letters simply as shapes for a minute, as if you were a baby in awe of the varied forms flowing in through your eyes. Let your eyes and body relax and take in the text as a work of art, letting go of the need to assign meaning to the words.

After you finish reading this paragraph, pause for a moment and try listening to the sounds around you, smelling the smells, sensing the temperature and pulses in your body, without assigning any meaning to your experiences. No labeling the sound as the "heater," or identifying the smell as "pancakes." See if for a few minutes you can simply receive your sensory world like a beautiful symphony.

The process of understanding what mindfulness is begins with firsthand experience. In my initial meeting with any class, I ask the students if anyone has heard of mindfulness. I want to know about their preconceived notions. Years ago the majority of my students had no idea what mindfulness was. Now when I ask, almost everyone raises a hand. The responses range from sage-like definitions to questions like "Isn't that what Oprah does?"

After introducing myself and learning a bit about the students, I invite the class to sit in attentive silence for one minute. Students often finish this period of silence with a sense of amazement, saying something like, "It was so quiet I think I heard the buzz of the light bulbs." They are delighted. They have been in the same classroom for an entire year, and have never heard the noise right above their heads. Within one minute of silence, there it is. In one of my favorite exercises, I lead my students in eating raisins mindfully. Kids say there's as much taste in that tiny bit of food as in eating a whole watermelon. Sometimes students ask, "Is this magic?" It's the kind of magic that instead of tricking the mind by showing it something mysterious and unreal invites you to see how profoundly mysterious reality already is. I frequently say to students, "It's as if we were in the Muggle world of Harry Potter all this time and then all of a sudden, with mindfulness, we realized that there's the whole magical world of Hogwarts all around us."

A wealth of peer-reviewed mindfulness research has been validating what

practitioners have known for thousands of years. Practicing mindfulness regularly supports immune function, cognitive development, attention skills, and emotional regulation; promotes happiness; and even makes us more empathic. Mindfulness is being brought into the military, into boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies, and even into the Olympic Games, where you can watch athletes taking calming mindful breaths before their big event. There are other examples of how mindfulness is being used in the culture at large, including Congressman Tim Ryan's weekly congressional mindful sitting group, Chase Bank's "Resource Center for Mindful Spending," and the World Economic Forum at Davos that recently kicked off its annual meeting with the Mindful Leadership Experience. For mindfulness, the time is now.

If mindfulness works so well for adults, imagine how much easier it would be to teach self-love, inner resilience, and nonjudgmental awareness right in the beginning of life before the layers of psychological armoring build up. What would our world be like if every child was offered skills for nurturing and developing their hearts, bodies, and minds? The preliminary research on teaching mindfulness to youth is showing us exactly what we would most hope for. Research on mindfulness in youth has been shown to raise test scores, reduce impulsivity, enhance well-being, and build executive functioning.

You may be getting the feeling that mindfulness is the next wonder drug. It has been touted as the cure for everything from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to chronic pain to depression and from suffering itself. Though scientific results make it look like a magic pill, the difficulty is that we cannot swallow mindfulness with a glass of water; we have to practice diligently to experience its effects. Mindfulness is no anesthetic; we have to feel more instead of less. We may try mindfulness hoping it will make us feel immediately peaceful and happy, but often it forces us even more viscerally into our own anxiousness, fear, and discomfort. Mindfulness invites us to turn our ship of awareness directly into the storm. Its magic is that when we relax our resistance muscles and open up to what is true, here and now, a whole new way of being and teaching unfolds.

When we practice mindfulness, we are not memorizing what someone else has already discovered, we are setting up conditions in which we can observe the direct experiences in our own minds, bodies, and hearts. Defining mindfulness is like trying to explain to a child what the word *fun* means. It's easier just to play a game with them and, as they are dancing around gleefully, you can say, "This is called having fun." Instead of telling you what mindfulness is, I'll ask you a few questions.

- Have you ever been playing sports, making music, or creating art, when all your thoughts seemed to move into the background and you were totally absorbed in the present activity?
- Have you ever been in a dangerous situation where your senses became highly attuned and your attention was laser focused?

- Have you ever looked into the eyes of a baby and felt yourself dumbstruck with love and wonder?
- Have you ever become engrossed in a story where some complete stranger's successes felt like your successes, their hardships were your hardships, their joy was your joy?

In these kinds of moments, our awareness is rooted in the present moment without our minds getting involved with judgments and comparisons. These moments of awareness often arise spontaneously, but we practice mindfulness so that we can cultivate it not just in extreme cases but in our normal everyday moments. If you are walking, and are aware of the touch of your feet on the ground and the audiovisual stimuli streaming in as you walk, then you are mindfully walking. If you are driving a car and are aware of the road signs zooming by and the feel of the wheel in your hands, then you are mindfully driving. As simple as this sounds, just think of how many times you may have arrived at a destination across town and realized that you were consumed in thoughts the entire ride. Being mindful could save your life.

Mindfulness is not some new-fangled invention. You don't need to construct this awareness for your students or yourself; we are born with it. In fact, in some ways, children are far more mindful than adults. A child gazing with wide-eyed wonder at ants on a leaf is a clear example of mindful attention. As babies emerge into the world, everything is brand new and miraculous. Of course, everything is still miraculous 20, 30, or 40 years later, but our adult minds somehow learn to make the mysterious mundane. Developmental neuropsychology shows that the brain of an infant is twice as active and adaptive as it is when a person reaches the age of 18. Just as the child playing peek-a-boo believes that the world disappears behind his hands, adults seem to trick themselves into thinking that just because they have restricted their breadth of awareness, the wide-open world is gone. Somehow we can fly over snow-capped mountains in an airplane, bored, only glancing up occasionally from our sudoku puzzle. It's all too easy to spend our time planning, worrying, and fiddling around on our gadgets while the magnificence of life passes by.

It's never too late to experience the mystery and exhilaration of life. Mindfulness invites us back to the preciousness of the present moment. Kids are already immersed in the present moment, and I am mostly interested in not squashing the bright awareness that is already there. I begin by telling students that we are going to "play mindfulness." There's no homework, no tests, and no way you could possibly get it wrong. By the time we have become adults, most of us have been thoroughly schooled to think that to be loved we need get all the answers right. The mindful way is to unravel some of these old standards so that we can feel happy exactly as we are. For adults mindfulness returns us to direct engagement with the present moment, like you were kneeling down on one knee and getting engaged to this moment, and saying yes!

The Mindful Education Revolution

Sitting on his bunk bed, locked behind juvenile detention bars, 17-year-old Damon feels his breath softly rising and falling. As another angry thought surfaces, he remembers his mindfulness lesson and notices the tension in his body. He smiles at the passing thought and feels his whole body relax. He notices an inner spaciousness and a sense of freedom that he's not sure he's felt before.

Across town eight-year-old Susan walks to the peace corner in her classroom. She is aware of anxious sensations in her heart and throat—the same feelings she has every time she takes a test. She sits on a comfy cushion, closes her eyes, and imagines she is getting a big hug. The tightness loosens, and a warmth spreads through her body.

As Susan's teacher, Nia, walks into a meeting with the school's vice principal, she uses mindful breathing to stay centered and calm amid the swirling thoughts and feelings as she remembers their past disagreements about discipline and punishment. This time, to her surprise, the vice principal is asking for advice. How is it that Nia's class has gotten the best test scores and yet is the only one that doesn't seem stressed? "Is it this mindfulness thing? Can you teach the rest of us how to do it?"

As you read these words, students from Rwanda to Israel to Jamaica and throughout the United States and Canada are exercising their attention muscles, they are opening their hearts to gratitude and forgiveness, they are learning to relax and to love themselves. Meanwhile teachers are getting the inner resources they desperately need, learning self-compassion, stress-relief, and invaluable lessons to teach their students. They are gaining the inner calm and compassionate attention that can make teaching the passionate profession that originally inspired them. This movement begins within each of our hearts and can transform the entire world.

Doesn't every one of us—teachers, parents, and children—want to feel relaxed rather than stressed, happy rather than depressed, attentive rather than distracted? Don't we want to feel balanced in our mind, hearts, and bodies? Of course we do. It feels better that way.

Students are told to pay attention a thousand times in school, but rarely are they taught how. We tell our kids to be nice to each other again and

again, without ever teaching them the incredibly accessible exercises that cultivate empathy and forgiveness. We tell students not to be so reactive and even put them in juvenile detention centers all because they can't regulate the disturbances within their own bodies. There are methods for teaching impulse control, attention, and empathy, but young people have rarely been taught them. Mindfulness has been effectively training these qualities for millennia, and there is a mounting research base that backs up its immense health benefits.

Many in the education field are now looking to mindfulness as an antidote to the escalating dysregulation of the youth in our society. The statistics are disturbing, and they validate the concerns of teachers and parents alike. The rates of severe psychological disorders have spiked at younger and younger ages. The National Institute of Mental Health reports, "Approximately one in every four to five youth in the U.S. meets criteria for a mental disorder with severe impairment across their lifetime" (Merikangas et al., 2010). We can look at health factors in nearly every arena and see the same accelerating imbalance. Obesity, autism, attention deficit disorder, anxiety, depression, bullying—whether it is social, psychological, or physical, the trends are moving in an unsettling direction.

We can listen to experts in the fields of education, developmental psychology, and neuroscience, but the most important people we need to listen to are our children. Our kids are the canaries in the coalmine, the most vulnerable members of our society, responding to the stressors of our world. What is unaddressed in adult society rears its head in the sandbox games our children play. When I work with young children in my therapy practice, I invite them to play with a vast assortment of little figurines in a sand tray. Invariably the worlds and scenarios the children create represent the unresolved emotional experiences of their lives. A child of domestic violence puts a baby in a crib surrounded by wolves; a child whose parents are getting divorced chooses two houses and places a wall between them. The children represent their inner emotional state in symbols and then play with them to try to find resolution. The stressors children are raised with form the architecture of their very brains and bodies, influencing who they will be for the rest of their lives.

As children overhear the daily news of school shootings, wars, and ocean levels rising, their minds and bodies are developing amid this myriad of stressors. When the stress levels are high, children sound an alarm with their dysregulation. I hear this alarm in the serious depression and anxiety in my young psychotherapy clients. I heard this alarm loud and clear from a roaring applause in a recent mindfulness assembly I was leading for 150 high school seniors. What about mindfulness, you may ask, would elicit a standing ovation from teenagers?

After a 10-minute silent breathing practice, a young woman in the assembly audience asked an important question. "As I was sitting I was almost falling asleep. What do I do about that?" "Are you tired?" I asked. "Whenever I stop doing stuff, I crash," she said. When I asked what she was

so busy doing, she gave me an exasperated laundry list of classwork, extracurricular activities, and family and social engagements. I responded, “We all have so much we are doing for school, for our parents, to look cool with our friends, that deep down we are bone tired. It’s not that mindfulness makes us tired, it’s that mindfulness shows us how tired we actually are.” The whole room seemed to be nodding in unison. “Perhaps we should reinstitute nap time from preschool into every grade,” I suggested.

Big smiles appeared on the students’ faces and then clapping, hooting, and eventually the standing ovation. A standing ovation for nap time? These students, and other students around the world, are profoundly stressed. Whether it is in the impoverished Oakland schools where I work or in progressive prep schools, students are crying out for calm. They need an environment in which their nervous systems can relax and feel nourished. In my psychotherapy practice and in my travels to schools around the world I always ask kids if they enjoy being in school. Sadly the majority of them look at me quizzically, as if the possibility of enjoying school never occurred to them.

As an adult I still sometimes awaken from terrified dreams about being back in school, unprepared for a test. When our nervous systems are on high alert, or when we are flushed with self-critical thoughts, then our working memories function poorly, our creative juices do not flow, and our collaborative capacities are stymied. The premise of mindful education is that all human beings are born with the seeds of the most beneficial universal qualities, such as compassion, creativity, integrity, and wisdom. From this perspective the ideal of education is to teach in such a way that fosters these beautiful latent qualities. Instead of creating an atmosphere of stress, competition, and punishment, we create an atmosphere of acceptance, care, and encouragement. We start by honoring children exactly as they are; when they receive this type of attention, children can grow to their fullest human potential. As any teacher knows, when a student feels safe, relaxed, and attentive, learning comes naturally.

When the teenagers were applauding for nap time, I thought of the movement in high school education to push the start of the school day a bit later. It turns out that biologically it is healthier for teens to wake up later. It’s not that they are lazy and obstinate; rather, they are answering an inner biological call. With this in mind, two schools in Minnesota agreed to push the school day back, and there was a significant reduction in school dropout rates, less depression, and higher grades (Wahlstrom, 2002). Any teenager in the world could tell you that they naturally need to go to sleep later and wake up later. All we had to do was ask.

When we don’t listen to our students, we are in a perpetual battle against them. When we don’t honor the amount of physical movement kids need, we have to fight them or medicate them into sitting at a desk all day. When we don’t offer students a healthy way to express difficult emotions, we end up being perpetually frustrated by their behaviors. When we don’t teach them

how to pay attention, we end up yelling at them when they are distracted. So many teachers have expressed grief to me because they feel as if they are in a war with the very kids they want to help.

Year after year I have watched schoolteachers entering the classroom on the first day as hopeful and inspired as a child taking its first steps. But sadly, by the end of the year, the teacher is often beleaguered, crawling toward the final day. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future reports that 46 percent of all new teachers in the United States leave the profession within five years. They report, "In 1987–88 the typical teacher had 15 years of experience, but by 2007–08 the typical teacher had just 1 to 2 years of experience" (Black, Neel, & Benson, 2008). The teacher drop-out rate is worse than the drop-out rate for children. Before any good teaching and learning can happen, we need to cultivate environments where children and teachers aren't running for the exits. We need to nourish the inner lives of our students *and* teachers.

The History of Mindful Education

After World War II the World Health Organization commissioned psychologist John Bowlby to study the psychological health of Europe's children. Part of his professional recommendations read, "The infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment" (Bowlby, 1951). You may find nothing revelatory about this quote; what is shocking about this statement is how revolutionary an idea it was to parents and teachers at the time. There was a great fight against Bowlby's idea that children needed warmth and affection to grow into healthy adults. Many assumed that as long as food and shelter were provided, the child would be fine. If the child had emotional or behavioral problems, it was not connected to the possible neglect or abuse they had received. As research progresses we see more and more how a child's emotional environment is key in the development of not only physical and emotional health but also academic and worldly success.

It's not that the idea of having an empathic presence when teaching children had never been thought of before. Educational visionaries like Maria Montessori and Rudolph Steiner recommended experiential and emotionally responsive teaching before Bowlby ever published his study. If we look all the way back at the roots of language, we see that the word *learn* comes from the same etymological root of *footprint* and *track*. At one time all of our ancestors learned not in square desks but following animal tracks through open prairies and forests. We learned not *about* the stars, animals, and elements but *from* them. Imagine yourself as a child following your parents through the streams and thickets, learning the prints of deer, fox, and bear. Take your child to work day was every day. Originally education was purely sensory, relational, and a wholly mindful experience.

Although some teachers have always understood the necessity for a holistic education, the main current of public schooling has done very little to address the full spectrum of emotional, social, physical, and other aspects of the "whole child." In the early 1980s Howard Gardener posited his "multiple intelligences theory" (Gardner, 1983). This theory sees humans as having nine relatively independent arenas of intelligence, each of which needs to be

exercised and nourished. The nine types are linguistic, logic-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. In remembering the importance of all these neglected human aspects, we are also becoming aware of the aspects within ourselves that may have been neglected in our own schooling and homes.

As more of an interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential thinker, I always felt like I wasn't smart enough in school. Because of the logic-mathematical-minded school system I was raised in, I would think, "maybe there's something wrong with me." How many children like me, who are not memorization or mathematically minded, feel disempowered, miss the boat, and then feel as though they are trailing behind for years. It was deeply liberating when I was privileged enough later in life to study philosophy, psychology, and meditation and learn, to my great astonishment that I naturally excelled in this type of learning.

Emotional intelligence, a term popularized by Daniel Goleman, has shifted the educational dialogue from strictly looking at IQ to EQ (emotional quotient). Goleman's work helped support the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) movement, which had been bringing values-based educational learning into schools since the late 1960s, beginning at the Yale School of Medicine's Child Study Center. SEL programs have become prevalent around the world, and in many of the largest U.S. school districts and have been shown to support emotional regulation, social competency, and resiliency as well as increase academic achievement by 11 percent (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

SEL programs support students in developing these five social emotional competencies:

- Self-management
- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision making

One of the leading visionaries of the SEL movement is Linda Lantieri, the director of the Inner Resilience Program and founding board member of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). I led a discussion with Lantieri, Goleman, and neuroscience author and psychiatry professor Daniel Siegel at the Mindfulness in Education conference at the Omega Institute. Lantieri and Goleman talked at length about their initial conversations 20 years ago forming what is now CASEL. I was inspired to ask these two visionaries, who helped transform the heart of education through SEL, what role mindfulness could play in the future of education.

The answer was clear. They discussed the core competencies of SEL and went on to explain how mindfulness practices are the best ways to cultivate these competencies. Siegel gave a synthesis of everything we had been

saying about SEL and mindfulness in one word: *integration*.

He brought together all of the profound information Goleman and Lantieri had shared about mindfulness and its effects on attention, emotion, and behavior and explained it through the lens of neuroscience. He described how mindfulness practices support the integration of separated functional areas of the brain, linking them with synaptic connections. When mindfulness links the brain up in this way, the five competencies of self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making naturally arise.

Instead of telling children to be kind, attentive, and balanced, practicing mindfulness actively fosters these qualities. With this in mind, many SEL programs are integrating mindfulness as the training ground for their ethics and values-based curriculum. Mindfulness can support and be woven into the great wisdom of social emotional learning, multiple intelligence theory, and many other conscious education philosophies. Instead of pushing aside educational paradigms that have come before, mindfulness supports the cognitive, emotional, physical, and relational aspects of learning.

Mapping the Movement

For many years in the mindfulness in education community, we have asked ourselves the question of how best to deliver mindfulness-based curricula. We've arrived at three main approaches to introducing mindfulness in youth-based settings. Many schools, organizations, after-school programs, juvenile detention centers, therapy centers, and other institutions are learning to integrate these invaluable practices. In learning to create a mindful classroom environment for our students, we will find it useful to take a look at the approaches others have taken. The three main forms have been:

- Training and self-care for teachers
- Direct service to students
- Curriculum-based teaching

Training and Self-Care for Teachers

Many organizations focus exclusively on the cultivation of mindfulness in the teachers. The trainings help teachers with self-care. The vision is that the teacher's sense of well-being will naturally translate into an environment of wellness for the students. The trainings that are based on working primarily with teachers work from the belief that mindfulness is only truly taught through the transmission of an experienced practitioner. People in this camp often look with frustration at the mindfulness-based curricula for sale, because teachers who use them may teach the exercises without ever having done mindfulness practices themselves. Imagine a teacher banging a bell and yelling at kids to be still and relaxed. Instead of teaching kids to liberate their minds, this could become mindfulness in the name of control and obedience.

The format for these trainings can be as simple as a professional development time where teachers get massages and are taught relaxation techniques. Other programs are full year-long trainings where participants experience silent, five-day mindfulness retreats and are given progressive instruction in embodiment, mind training, and emotional intelligence.

Caring for yourself is always a good idea. Resources and time are often an

obstacle for schools, and longer trainings can be expensive and hard for educators to afford. Finding a way to offer these teachings to all caregivers in an economically accessible form is an important concern for this movement.

Some organizations that take this approach: Inner Resilience Program, CARE for Teachers, SMART in Education, and Parker Palmer's Courage and Renewal Programs.

Direct Service to Students

Many organizations offer direct services provided by experienced mindfulness practitioners. These outside trainers go into juvenile detention halls, schools, and after-school programs to teach mindfulness practices directly. There has also been an inspiring new trend of schools hiring for an internal position of social emotional learning/mindfulness director. This teacher visits classrooms to lead trainings and often has an office that groups and individuals can visit for extra mindfulness time.

Organizations that deliver direct service programs intentionally hire teachers with a depth of experience and teaching skill, who can often transmit the practices in a very inspiring way. Cultivating a deep mindfulness practice can take great diligence, and learning how to communicate these practices is a real art, so there is great benefit to using experienced mindfulness teachers.

The problem with direct service is that often these amazing teachers open up new ways of seeing the world for kids, but then they leave. There can be a lack of systemic change with direct service, and there can even be a danger of kids developing an authenticity that instead of being reinforced can be judged or suppressed by a community that has not yet built an adequate container. If the classroom teacher is not supportive of mindfulness, then the outside provider's lessons may be directly contrary to the way the teacher directs the class.

Some examples of organizations that take this approach: Mind Body Awareness Project, Holistic Life Foundation, Mindful Schools, the Lineage Project.

Curriculum-Based Teaching

The third view is that mindfulness lessons are inherently supportive for the emotional, mental, and physical development of all children. In this approach the lessons that teach children to breathe, become aware of their thought patterns, and relax into their bodies are inherently helpful even if coming from a teacher without thorough training. The view is that the lessons should be laid out in as conscious a way as possible. This viewpoint has resulted in a proliferation of mindfulness-based curricula for students of all ages and demographics, some of which can be bought online and used without any previous training.

Mindfulness practices have also begun to be incorporated into larger SEL curricula as well as large school systems internationally. There are many basic mindfulness concepts and practices that are being woven into antibullying campaigns, test preparation, and other student-based learning projects.

Some examples of organizations that take this approach: Mind Up Curriculum, .b curriculum, Learning to BREATHE Curriculum, Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens.

All of the Above

As always, it's never that one side is right and the other is wrong. We need a multifaceted approach to integrating these practices into work with youth. Of course we need to begin with caring for and training the teachers. Of course it is helpful to bring in experienced mindfulness teachers to guide the way and mentor the movement. Of course curriculum is incredibly useful to support educators in learning how to integrate these practices into their settings. Even those who would never have thought to practice mindfulness are now getting a taste of it, so let's make sure we are offering them a piece of cake rather then throwing it in their face.

An example of an integrated approach to mindfulness in education is the South Burlington School District in Vermont. I have led several multiple-day mindfulness retreats for their teachers and administrators. They have also brought Linda Lantieri and various other mindfulness and SEL experts for professional development trainings. Their teachers and school therapists have integrated mindfulness curricula into K–12 schools so that children receive these lessons every year as they pass from elementary up through high school graduation. I have also taught in their elementary, middle, and high school classrooms and had their teachers shadow me so they could learn the lessons directly. They have committed to the well-being of their teachers and then give curriculum resources for the teachers to deliver. This is integration in action.

The Science of Mindfulness

The great neuroscientists of ancient history, having no scanning technology, sat still and witnessed the passing phenomenon of their minds, hearts, and bodies. One classic mindfulness technique, the body scan, could be seen as an internal scanner. During a body scan we pass awareness from head to toe, scanning the same phenomena that the neuroscientists are reading on their screens. When I began doing the mindful body scan practice, I very quickly experienced a deep relaxation, focused attention, and an emotional balancing. I didn't need a scientist to tell me what was happening, I was watching the transformation with an inner lens.

Mindfulness is an inner science, and we use our own minds, hearts, and bodies for the research. Instead of a cold scientific study, we examine our inner lives with compassion and tenderness. This inquiry into what makes us tick can offer personal insights as well as a greater sense of self-love.

The other form of scientific research, conducted in labs and academic institutions, is objectively coming to the same conclusions about mindfulness that practitioners have known for thousand of years. Neuroscientists, medical doctors, and even geneticists are showing that mindfulness cultivates attention, compassion, happiness, and relaxation and decreases impulsivity, anxiety, and other difficult emotional states.

I offer here a brief synopsis of some of the science that is pertinent to our exploration of mindfulness in education. I start by looking at the wealth of mindfulness research that has been conducted for the benefit of adults, especially for teachers. It's my hope that this research inspires you to cultivate your own mindfulness practice and gives you invaluable knowledge to share with your colleagues.

Proven Benefits

The number of scientific literature articles published on mindfulness per year has spiked in the last 30 years from 1 in 1982 to 477 in 2012 (Mindful Research Guide, 2013).

When Jon Kabat-Zinn started the Stress Reduction Clinic at the

Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979, the word *mindfulness* was nowhere in the medical lexicon. At the clinic Kabat-Zinn developed a program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which at first was seen as a fringe healing modality. How could breathing and loving yourself help medical patients?

Kabat-Zinn convinced the doctors to send their "treatment-resistant" patients to the Stress Reduction Clinic. In other words, the clinic got all of the patients that Western medicine had no idea how to treat. After practicing mindfulness for eight weeks, these "treatment-resistant" patients started having remarkable transformations. The MBSR patients began finding dramatic symptom reduction in conditions such as high blood pressure, psoriasis, and fibromyalgia. People with chronic pain disorders experienced meaningful reductions in their pain and suffering, and across the board patients reported a greater sense of well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1985, 1987).

Doctors now estimate that 60 to 80 percent of the clients they see are coming in with stress-related concerns (Rosch, 1997). Migraines, insomnia, high blood pressure, heart attacks, heart disease, anxiety disorders, depression, and a vast array of our most common ailments are stress-related. Yet only 3 percent of primary care office visits incorporate stress management counseling (Nerurkar, Yeh, Davis, Birdee, & Phillips, 2011).

As profound as Western medicine proves to be every time we take antibiotics for infections that would otherwise kill us, it often doesn't help with more systemic health concerns. Similar to our education system, our medical establishment has rarely looked at the whole patient. But similar to our education system, there is a great shift under way. Medical science is realizing that the health of the patient depends on integrating mind, heart, and body.

The following examples show just a few of the remarkable health benefits that mindfulness research has been proving.

- Body: Mindfulness has been shown to address physical health problems directly and is effective in reducing pain and high blood pressure and improving the symptoms of physical conditions such as psoriasis and fibromyalgia. Mindfulness practice has even been correlated to slowing the rate of cellular aging. Telomorase activity, a predictor of long-term cellular viability, was found to be significantly greater in long-term mindfulness practitioners. (Jacobs et al., 2011).
- Mind: Neuroscience research is showing that mindfulness can positively transform the architecture and operation of the brain, improving sustained attention, visuospatial memory, working memory, and concentration (Jha, Krompinger, & Baime, 2007; Chambers, Chuen Yee Lo, Allen, 2008; Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, & Goolkasian, 2010). Practicing mindfulness can increase blood flow to and create a thickening of the cerebral cortex in areas associated with attention and

emotional integration (Davidson et al., 2003). Research on mindfulness practitioners has shown a reduction in gray matter density in the amygdala correlated with a decrease in stress and anxiety (Hölzel et al., 2011).

- Heart: Mindfulness research has been shown to promote the ability to feel in control, make meaningful relationships, accept experience without denying the facts, manage difficult feelings, and be calm, resilient, compassionate, and empathic (Salmon et al., 2004). Mindfulness as a psychological intervention is proving effective in addressing substance abuse, stress, anxiety, and recurrent depression and improving sleep (Baer, 2003). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has proven more effective than antidepressants in reducing depressive symptoms and improving well-being (Kuyken et al., 2008).
- Interconnectedness: In one study, participants were unknowingly presented with a staged scene in a waiting room to measure their compassion responses. When an actor on crutches hobbled in, a control group responded compassionately 15 percent of the time, while mindfulness-trained participants responded compassionately 50 percent of the time. It seems that mindfulness can even make people nicer (Condon et al., 2013)! Last but not least, mindfulness has been shown to enhance auditory focus and make music more enjoyable to listen to (Diaz, 2013). Not only can mindfulness make us kinder people, it helps us enjoy our lives.

Benefits for Teachers, Parents, and Youth Care Providers

Teachers, parents, and other youth care providers have an unusually high degree of stress and burnout. “Compassion fatigue” is a concept that refers to the way we can overextend our caregiving without getting the adequate support we need. The problem is that when we are perpetually trying to help others but not taking care of ourselves, we get exhausted, we burn out, and we are not able to do our jobs at full capacity.

Many trainings are now being offered that focus on supporting teachers’ mindfulness practice and self-care. The Stress Management and Resilience Training (SMART), Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE), and a growing body of other mindfulness-based teacher trainings are now being studied with very promising results. For example, schoolteachers who underwent an eight-week mindfulness training at the University of California San Francisco experienced a decrease in anxiety, stress, and depression, while experiencing an increase in compassion and other positive states of mind. Five months after the end of training, these benefits remained for those who had stayed engaged with the practices. Margaret Kemeny, the lead author of the study, says, “We were able to see that the intervention had

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